Economics of Risky Health Behaviours

Course organiser:

Aurélia Lépine, Associate Professor in Health Economics, Institute for Global Health, University College London – a.lepine@ucl.ac.uk

Outline

Risky health behaviors such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, unprotected sex, and poor diets and sedentary lifestyles (leading to obesity) are a major source of preventable deaths. The course aims to understand how to measure and analyse risky behaviours as well as their traditional determinants using experimental economic methods. It is an applied course delivered in four sessions in which we will analyse survey data on STATA. The course first presents an overview of the prevalence and trends of risky health behaviours and of the main research topics in this field. Then, we will discuss the issue in measuring risky health behaviours, often prone to social desirability biases and you will learn two indirect elicitation methods to overcome sensitivity biases, namely the *list experiment* and a non-verbal method that I have recently developed called *colorbox*. The course then covers the measurement of attitude toward risks and time preferences using experimental tasks (e.g., *Eckel and Grossman and Gneezy and Potter* tasks to elicit risk aversion level). Finally, the course teaches students how to program those different tools using the open-source Android app ODK collect.

The course is designed for PhD students who have some intention to collect primary data part of their PhD and who want to learn techniques to study and measure sensitive behaviours. Note that despite using applications from health research, methods covered in this course to address sensitivity bias and to measure risk and time preferences can also be applied to non-health topics.

Keywords: sensitivity bias, social disability biases, preferences, data collection methods

Assignment: Design of a survey measuring a sensitive behaviour on ODK